



"Community Bookshelf," Central Library parking garage, Kansas City Public Library, photo by Mike Sinclair

MISSOURI ARTS COUNCIL • DECEMBER 2012

Enjoy the Arts Live and In Person at Your Public Library

by Barbara MacRobie

"Libraries should be places where people go not just to be informed, but to be inspired."

— Amy Brown, adult programs coordinator, North Kansas City Public Library

"We are always trying to go beyond the books," Livingston County Library Director Robin Westphal told us. She wasn't talking only about the non-print media that libraries have been sharing for decades, like CDs, DVDs, and internet access. Robin and other librarians throughout Missouri are creatively finding ways to bring the arts alive right within their library walls.

Whether they work in big-city libraries with multiple branches and generous resources, or in small town rural libraries, librarians are programming plays, concerts, movies, encounters with authors and artists, hands-on art classes, art exhibits, unusual special events, and more.

"A long time ago, we consumed information just on paper," said Brandy Sanchez, public services librarian at the Daniel Boone Regional Library and co-coordinator of its Center Aisle cinema series. "But now there are so many more fabulous formats. Different formats not only enhance people's awareness and understanding, but help them dive deeper into their passions."

Here is just a small sampling of the plenitude of lively arts we encountered when we talked with librarians across the state. We hope their stories will inspire you to explore adventures in the arts you might never imagined you'd find at your own public library.



Play literary mini-golf

You enter the Inferno through a wall of flame. You plunge down, down, and yet further down, until at last you emerge at the very bottom with a soul-searing crash.

At least your golf ball does—if you're playing literary mini-golf, the new hit special event at the Hannibal Free Public Library.



Library Shelves Molly Green sets up the entrance to the Inferno.

For one evening a couple of times a year, the entire library becomes a miniature golf course with holes themed to books including Dante's *Inferno*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, and—of course—Louis Sachar's *Holes*.

The project has been designed and made by “my very talented, energetic, enthusiastic staff,” said Hallie Yundt-Silver, library director. Starting with a purchased commercial set of mini-golf greens, the staff created all the obstacles and decorations. The construction was a triumph of the ingenious use of ordinary, inexpensive materials.

For Rick Riordan's *Lightning Thief*, a bolt of lightning made from yellow pool noodles zigzagged under the shelving units of the fiction stacks. Wild Things cavorted in a forest made from the classic children's craft of newspaper trees.

“Everyone got involved, from our custodian to people's parents,” said Hallie. Plastic piping was donated by a local

landscaper who was the father of one of the library staff members; the pipes snaked down two flights of stairs to enable the golf balls to descend into the infernal depths.

The library created the course this year in May originally for the teen summer reading kickoff event, at which it was wildly popular. “We also wanted something that would appeal to all ages,” Hallie said. So the library brought the course out again in September for the general public as the finale for Library Card Signup Month. Playing the course was free; the Friends of the Library support group made the event into an effective fundraiser by selling hot dogs and picnic food.

As we talked with many librarians, the theme of collaboration came up over and over again. The Hannibal library was loaned golf clubs by the Missouri River Regional Library in Jefferson City, which runs its own annual mini-golf event, and from Hannibal Parks and Recreation.



Golf balls follow the Yellow Brick Road—bricks wrapped in plastic tablecloths—to the rainbow at the hole that creates the world of the *Wizard of Oz*. Don't miss the lion, tiger, and bear!

Why mini-golf at a library? “It's subterfuge!” said Hallie. “We figure if we can get you here, you might come back and get a library card. We have found that the only time we see some people is for our special programs, but they come to each one, and every time they check something out.”

Learn more

- Hannibal Free Public Library, hannibal.lib.mo.us — Founded in 1845, the library now serves more than 16,000 patrons with more than 83,000 items.



Albert Paley's *Cypher*, Columbia Public Library

Find art all around you

Oil paintings on the walls, glass sculptures in display cases, bronze statues on the grounds outside—look around your library and you can't help but find visual art as an intrinsic part of the total library experience.

The Columbia Public Library, the headquarters of the Daniel Boone Regional Library system, has so much art that it even has a special section on its website devoted to artworks at the library. A community favorite is *Cypher* by New York artist Albert Paley, a pair of 30-foot steel sculptures at the library entrances. The building also houses the permanent collection of the Columbia Art League.

An anonymous donation paid for *Cypher*, and librarians told us that the generosity of donors is one reason that installing artwork at a library doesn't require a big budget. Another resource is the talents of library staff—and sometimes their families. The Slater Public Library in central Missouri has art thanks to both. All around the library there are Western-themed paintings on permanent loan from former Slater resident Dr. Alexander McBurney, and “found object art” by the library

director's husband, John Haynie. “John takes different pieces of tools and machinery, and rearranges them,” Donna Haynie told us. Hinges, spark plugs, wrenches, refrigerator motors, tractor parts—in John's hands they become fanciful animals, from a three-inch grasshopper to a three-foot pterodactyl.

John has been a welder since 1960 and has been constructing critters since 1968. When asked by the Slater *Main Street News* why he chose to sculpt animals, he said, “It's hard to say, it is just something I love to do.”

When the couple installed the art around the library in 2011, “At first we were going to leave it here for only a little while, but people just love it,” Donna said. “Kids get so fascinated. Men recognize the tools.

“His bigger things are at home in our front yard,” Donna added, “but we brought the pterodactyl over in our truck and put it up in front of the library for Halloween.”

At the Kirkwood Public Library in suburban St. Louis, a work of art installed in May 2012 on a ground floor wall has special significance for the citizens. It is a seven-foot-tall map of early black settlements in the city. African-Americans have been an integral part of Kirkwood since the city was founded more than 150 years ago in 1853. The map was a prominent feature of the exhibit *Kirkwood Roots* at the Missouri History Museum, a special exhibit of images, objects, and interviews exploring the history and culture of Kirkwood's African-American community.



Turkey by John Haynie, Slater Public Library

Both the exhibit and the map were the brainchild of Thomas Sleet, a professional artist who is also the museum's media developer and whose mother grew up in Kirkwood. After the exhibit closed at the end of February 2012, the museum donated the map to the library. “We had a party to dedicate it,” said Deb Barry, the library's assistant director for youth services and programs, “and many of the people whose photos were in the exhibit came. It was a wonderful family reunion.”



Learn more

- [Art at the Columbia Public Library](#) – Photos and descriptions of paintings and sculptures
- Columbia Art League, columbiaartleague.org
This member organization fosters arts education through classes, seminars, and workshops throughout the year.
- [Article](#) and [photo gallery](#) of John Haynie's Found Object Art at the Slater Public Library by the *Marshall Democrat-News*
- The Missouri History Museum's [blog post and slide show](#) about *Kirkwood Roots* and the symbolism Thomas Sleet used in his map
- Kirkwood Public Library, kpl.lib.mo.us –
“Enrich and enlighten” is the stated mission of this library in the heart of the historic inner-ring railroad suburb.

Kirkwood Roots by Thomas Sleet, Kirkwood Public Library. The meandering lines, etched into a slate-like surface, represent the rail and stream pathways frequented by African-Americans. The numbers represent different black neighborhoods.

See an art exhibit

As well as permanently installed visual art, libraries host a variety of special exhibits. Many are especially focused on showcasing the work of local artists.

The Richmond Heights Memorial Library in suburban St. Louis has large display cases in its foyer, Director Jeanette Piquet told us, and over the past three years has hosted works by many regional artists including glass from Third Degree Glass Factory, photography by Edward Crim, and book design and artwork by JoAnn Kluba of Paper Birds Studio. The Hannibal Free Public Library hosts a monthly rotating art exhibit funded and coordinated by the Hannibal Arts Council. The Missouri River Regional Library in Jefferson City has an art gallery with four different exhibits each year.



Watercolors by Miriam Krone of New Haven, Washington Public Library lobby gallery

When the Washington Public Library in east central Missouri, built originally in 1980, was renovated and expanded this year, the architects at the impetus of library Director Nell Redhage added a new front lobby with art gallery space. Every month, the library features a local professional or student artist. “The idea behind the gallery is to expose library patrons to artists’ work that they may not see otherwise,” Nell said. “The artists of course love it, and the displays have been so well received by the community. We have gotten lots of nice comments from our patrons that they enjoy looking at the different art each month.”

An exhibit resource for large library systems is their own collections, which are often too big to display all at once. The Kansas City Public Library “has what is probably the largest collection of postcards in captivity,” said Henry Fortunato, public affairs director, and plans a new exhibit to open in January 2013.

Traveling exhibits bring the world to local libraries. The worldwide art form of books themselves is the focus of a traveling exhibit of rare and fine printing from the 15th through 21st centuries, organized by the nonprofit Missouri Center for the Book from the collection of the St. Louis Mercantile Library. *The Art of the Printed Book* is at the Ellis Library at the University of Missouri-Columbia through January and will be at the Springfield-Greene County Library’s District Library Center in February and March.

Showcasing students

When the local artists are area students, the mission of the exhibit gets an extra layer of hands-on arts education.

Judy Cox, director of the Mercer County Library in Princeton on the state's north central border, told us that the art departments of the two county schools exhibit their students' works at the library. The North Kansas City Public Library has worked with the art teachers at the North Kansas City High School right across the street to give students a public place to display their projects. It is a classic win-win-win: an outlet for the students, an arts experience for library patrons, and a visual boost for the library.

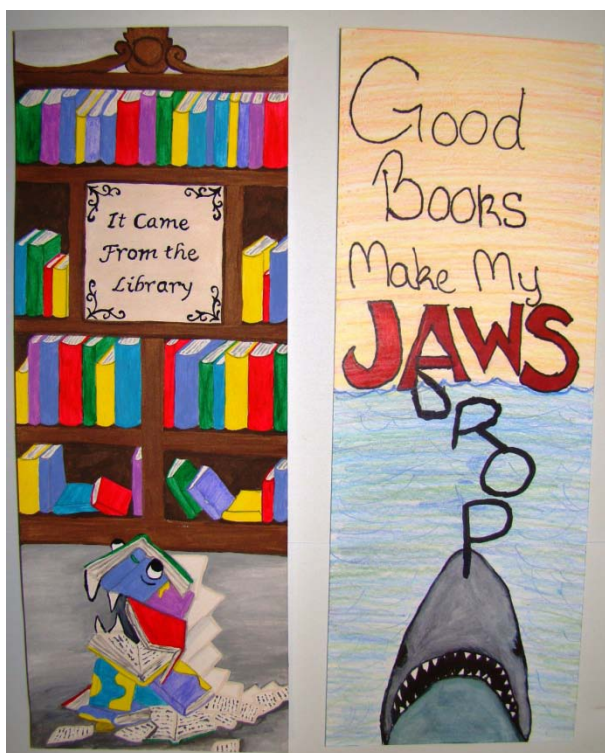
"It's nice for the public to see the good work the students are doing, and it really brightens up our space," said Amy Brown, the North Kansas City Public Library's adult programs coordinator. "We hope to do more with the high school as well as with the elementary and middle schools in our area, and with local artists. Our goal is two to three art shows each year."

Amy says the library plays an essential role in the life of North Kansas City, a municipality of only 4,800 people surrounded on all sides by the city of Kansas City.

"The Kansas City and Mid-Continent public libraries are monster systems compared to us, but we have a unique population and we work on meeting their different needs," she said. "We have a lot of long-term residents who are ageing, and we also have a lot of young families moving in. Any time we can stimulate people's interest in the arts, that's fodder for their own inspiration and creativity."



North Kansas City High School students' art, North Kansas City Public Library



2012 Third Place Winner, ages 12-15, Caitlyn Jones;
Teen Bookmark Contest, Livingston County Library

In northwestern Missouri, the Livingston County Library in Chillicothe has created an annual bookmark contest for area teens that Director Robin Westphal says is "one of my proudest programs we've done here. The quality is so high amongst these kids. And the big display showing all the entries—we do not leave out a single one—really brings people into the library."

Library patrons not only enjoy the annual art exhibit resulting from the contest but get to take a piece of it home. Every year, the library prints and laminates 250 copies each of the two first-place winners, ages 12-15 and ages 16-19, and gives them out for free. There are never any leftovers, says Robin.

The library runs the contest in October in conjunction with the annual Teen Read Week of the national Young Adult Library Services Association, and coordinates with that year's Teen Read theme. For 2012, the Chillicothe contest's sixth year, the theme was "It Came From the Library." "We tell the kids they don't have to follow the theme, but so many of them really picked up on the 1950s horror flick idea."



2012 First Place Winner, ages 12-15, Jenna Williams; Teen Bookmark contest, Livingston County Library

The library started the contest by working with the art teachers at local schools. “It used to be the only entries we’d get would be from students in art classes, but now a lot of the entries are from other students including home-schooled kids,” Robin said. “Of course we want every teen in the area to enter! The entrance information is all over the library.”

The program involves both the young artists and the library patrons in the arts in a new way. “And it doesn’t even directly involve getting kids into reading. But I think as libraries we need to think about how we remain relevant,” Robin said. “If all we did was provide books, for some people we’d never reach them. When we do a program like the bookmarks, we are reaching people who have never stepped in here.”

Learn more

- Richmond Heights Memorial Library, rhml.lib.mo.us – Collections include more than 60,000 books, magazines, newspapers, videos, CDs, and audiobooks.
- Washington Public Library, ci.washington.mo.us – This library is so integrated into the life of its community that its website lives on the City’s own website.
- St. Louis Mercantile Library, usml.edu/mercantile – Founded in 1846, the oldest library west of the Mississippi, this membership library’s collections concentrate on Western Expansion and American rail and river transportation.
- Missouri Center for the Book, books.missouri.org – The statewide organization promotes the importance of reading for Missouri residents and recognizes Missouri authors, book illustrators, booksellers, publishers, and librarians.
- Mercer County Library, mcl.lib.mo.us – Established in 1926, the library serves nearly 3,800 people of Mercer County.
- North Kansas City Public Library, northkclibrary.org – The library is also the Media Center for North Kansas City High School across the street. Its motto is “your welcoming doorway to a world of information.”
- Livingston County Library, livingstoncountylibrary.org – The [Teens Pages](#) feature photos of the most recent bookmark contest winners with their bookmarks.



Watch a movie

Libraries show all kinds of films in a variety of themed series for children, teens, and adults, from recent releases like *Hugo* to classics like *The Manchurian Candidate*. At the Columbia Public Library, the monthly Center Aisle Cinema series has found its special niche: documentaries.

The library started Center Aisle Cinema with the calculated goal of attracting people in their 20s and 30s. “We’ve found that people come to the library when they

Jennifer Galvin (on screen), director of *Free Swim*, visits via Skype with Center Aisle Cinema audience members and co-coordinator Brad Winter (left).

are children, but then often stop coming until they have their own kids,” said librarian Brandy Sanchez, who with Brad Winter co-coordinates the program. “Center Aisle has indeed succeeded in what we wanted. But as it’s turned out the audience is also a mixed bag. The diversity is great—we love it!”

Audience members also get the chance to meet and talk with the film’s directors, as the series hosts directors in person as often as possible. Furthermore, “The film series builds a sense of community,” Brandy said, as the library creates collaborations with other Columbia organizations including the Ragtag Cinema theater and its annual True/False Film Fest that takes place in late February/early March. “We cross-promote each other’s events,” Brandy said.

Learn more

- Daniel Boone Regional Library, dbri.org – Three branches serve Boone and Callaway Counties along with Columbia.
- Center Aisle Cinema, films.dbri.org – The blog gives the lineup, provides a place for discussion, highlights new documentaries that have been added to the library’s collection, and promotes other free showings around Columbia.
- True/False Film Fest, truefalse.org – 2013 will be the 10th edition of this four-day nonstop celebration of documentary films.
- Ragtag Cinema, ragtagfilm.com – This independent arthouse theater shows current and archival films 365 days a year.

Come face-to-face with history

It’s a night in 1843, and a young author named Charles Dickens is sitting in his study imagining a Christmas ghost story. Over the next hour, Dickens becomes all 17 of the major characters in *A Christmas Carol* as he—or rather actor David zum Brunnen—enthalls audiences each winter at several branches of the Mid-Continent Public Library.

Zum Brunnen is a special kind of actor/storyteller, a historical reenactor, one of the many hosted by libraries throughout Missouri. Speaking in the first person as the historical characters themselves, reenactors use storytelling, dramatic acting, and spontaneous interaction with their 21st-century audiences to bring history to spellbinding life.

“Reenactors love to work with us so we can bring history—the arts—the world—alive in our libraries,” said Jessica Ford, public relations coordinator for the Mid-Continent system that serves the parts of Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties not covered by the Kansas City Public Library.

“One of our most enjoyed actors is Jim Two Crows Wallen from Blue Springs. He’s nationally known but happens to be a Missouri performer whom we’re lucky to have great access to,” Jessica said. One program that oral historian Wallen performs at the Mid-Continent library branches is *Civil War Santa*. Dressed as the way newspaper cartoonist Thomas Nast illustrated *A Visit With St. Nicholas* for Christmas 1862, Wallen uses letters and diaries from soldiers, wives, parents, and children to evoke the Christmases during this dark time. Among his other library performances are *Cowgirls*, *Cowpokes*, and *Cattle Drives*; *Two Women*, *a Blackbeard*, and *the Privateers*, and *Native Tales Along the Lewis and Clark Trail*, in which he draws on his Cherokee heritage.

Like an encounter with an author, an event with a reenactor is low-tech and therefore an experience even the smallest library can provide. David zum Brunnen uses props and a simple set that he brings with him. Jim Wallen brings only himself. An auditorium isn’t needed, only a space with enough room for the audience to sit.



Jim Two Crows Wallen as Civil War Santa



David zum Brunnen in his *Night Before Christmas Carol* at a branch of the Mid-Continent Public Library

"All their performances take place in our branches, so they go where the people can go," said Jessica. "You don't have to spend \$80 a ticket to see great performances. You can go right down the street, for free."

"A library today is not just words on a page that has to be turned. Why would we not try to show you everything? It's just another way of providing information. And it all ends up leading to reading. After people see *The Night Before Christmas Carol*, they check out Dickens' book or an audiobook. Then they start reading other Dickens novels."

Learn more

- Mid-Continent Public Library, mymcpl.org – Its slogan "Access Your World" exemplifies the mission of this system that serves more than 750,000 people with 30 branches and four automated "libraries to go."
- David zum Brunnen, EbzB Productions of North Carolina, ebzb.org, and Jim Two Crows Wallen, jimtrocrows.com

Listen to live music

"To those with ears to hear, libraries are really very noisy places. On their shelves we hear the captured voices of the centuries-old conversation that makes up our civilization," said Father Timothy S. Healy, president of the New York City Library in the early 1990s. In today's libraries, though, he would hear many other sounds, including live musical performances from bluegrass to bagpipes.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District offers a dizzying array of styles performed by regional musicians in concerts indoors and on the grounds of its 10 branches. Among the Missouri musicians the district has presented are folksingers Cathy Barton and Dave Para, the Central Bible College Chamber Choir, "Philosophical Flatpicker" Dan O'Callaghan, Lost Hill Bluegrass, Little Hoover's Big Band, and "Geezer, a local cover band whose lead guitarist and singer is the Greene County Clerk," said Kathleen O'Dell, director of community relations. Concerts are underwritten by the Friends of the Library.



Chris Schafer and John Stuart of the Holmes Brigade, Civil War reenactor camp musicians who play period music and tell the history of the songs, at a Springfield-Greene County Library District chautauqua

Music at libraries is often inextricably interwoven with other arts. Springfield-Greene specializes in "chautauqua" programs that pull together musicians and actor/scholar reenactors. The name comes from the town of Chautauqua, New York, where in the late 19th and early 20th centuries a popular form of cultural entertainment evolved. Under tents on summer evenings, traveling lecturers and musicians brought education and enjoyment to hundreds of small communities around the country. Springfield-Greene often holds its chautauquas in conjunction with its Big Read celebrations, the "one book, one community" nationwide project to inspire reading through a shared experience.

The April 2010 chautauqua focused on the 1930s and included reenactors as Henry Ford, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Will Rogers and Aimee Semple McPherson; music of Woody Guthrie; a workshop on radio during the Great Depression; and movies with Will Rogers and a talk about his film career.

The Webb City Public Library in the state's southwestern corner turns 100 on April 6, 2013, and plans a full year of celebrations for each decade starting in 1913, combining popular music, period dances, talks on local history, and exhibits including 100 years of fashion. "We are a very small library, the smallest in Jasper County, but we are fortunate to have a really nice facility and the space to do things like this," said Director Sue Oliveira. "We always combine the educational side with fun programs that pop out at people."

Learn more

- Springfield-Greene County Library District, thelibrary.org – Each week's special events in all the 10 branches serving Springfield and surrounding communities are listed right on the homepage.
- Webb City Public Library, webbcitylibrary.org – The renovation and new addition built in 2005 have greatly increased the ability of the 1914 Andrew Carnegie building's ability to serve Webb City's community of 11,000 people.

Meet an author

Author encounters are such a longtime staple of libraries' arts activities that we almost didn't include them in this survey of unexpected ways to explore the arts at your library. It's a rare library no matter how small that doesn't host at least one author event every year. But our taste buds were tickled by Nell Redhage's story of *Sundae With the Authors* at her Washington Public Library in July 2012.

"Seven local authors each made a brief presentation about their latest work, and then they were stationed throughout the entire library to greet patrons and sell and sign books, while attendees were treated to ice cream sundaes," she told us. "We had writers of children's books, sports, Missouri history, fiction, poetry—if you weren't interested in one, you'd be interested in another." The delicious twist on the standard author meet-and-greet helped attract more patrons to meet local authors and see the new library renovation.

Leandrea Lucas, manager of the Schlafly Branch of the St. Louis Public Library, told us her library does a similar multi-creator event but with visual artists. Every year, the branch hosts an evening reception called *Amazing Spirit Exhibit and Art Receptions* where eight to 10 artists show their work and share their stories. "It's a great event," Leandrea said. "And for some of our local artists, having their work at our library is the first time they have displayed it anywhere."



Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre performs *Chicago* at the Kansas City Public Library's Central Library in 2009 as one of six plays in their 2008/2009 Script-in-Hand season

Experience a show

The words leap off the pages from the shelves of Dewey Decimal section 792 when libraries partner with local theater groups.

Since 2005, the Kansas City Public Library has presented great plays of the word via Script-in-Hand performances by the professional actors of Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. As the name Script-in-Hand implies, these are readings, but staged readings that capture all of a play's excitement and the dramatic interactions between its characters.

"It's actors in the act of reading—so it's a very appropriate way to do a play in a library," said Henry Fortunato, the library's public affairs director. "The scenery and props are pretty minor. There are no special effects. The words are what is important."

The 2012 season was themed *Women of the Years* to focus on six plays written by or focusing on women, such as *The Sisters Rosenweig* by Wendy Wasserstein, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange, and *My Fair Lady* by Alan J. Lerner and Frederick Lowe.

"It's a deceptively simple approach. All our actors are professionals, and they are used to picking up scripts and reading out loud," said Karen Paisley, artistic director of Metropolitan Theatre Ensemble. "But unlike writers and painters, who can work independently, actors need each other to do what we do. So Script-in-Hand is a way for us to stay sharp as artists and to get to chew on many great roles."

Learn more

- Kansas City Public Library, kclibrary.org – The Central Library is the largest of the 10 branches, with an auditorium and a main lobby that can be set up with amphitheater-style seating.
- Metropolitan Theatre Ensemble, metkc.org – The company is committed to professional performances and staged readings of classic and new works as well as its Process to Performing Arts education programs for schools and the community.



Paulette Bergman and Lois Molton enjoy "painting with paper" at a free class at the Mount Vernon branch of the Barry-Lawrence Regional Library

Make something cool

Arts, crafts, and hobby classes are some of the most common and popular programs at libraries statewide.

"I think libraries are all about growing creativity—nurturing the spirit and soul, whether it's with a book or a movie or hands-on art," said Tess Nichols, supervisor of the Mount Vernon branch of the Barry-Lawrence Regional Library in southwest Missouri.

Nicole Clawson, manager of youth services of the wide-ranging St. Louis County Library, pointed out that without the library's arts programs, "Some kids would never have the opportunity to experience art." Every year the library system has a themed program called

Art @ Your Library for preschoolers through age 18 that every two months focuses on a different art—music, writing, dance and more. The programs are held throughout all 20 of the library's branches, and they include live performances as well as hands-on activities. "We bring in Missouri arts organizations including Paul Mesner Puppets and STAGES St. Louis. Our branch staff also present programs."

Grown-ups get to explore their own hands-on creativity in free classes at the Mount Vernon library thanks to a grant from the Mount Vernon Regional Arts Council, Tess Nichols said. "We've done everything from drawing to beading," she said. "We are able to pay artists to give the programs, and we provide all the materials. The artists have also been incredibly generous with bringing some materials along, which has really allowed us to let our grant money go even further."

In southeast Missouri, budding authors receive feedback on their works in progress at the *Write Your Own Story* programs at the Cape Girardeau Public Library. Children in Sikeston enjoy craft programs connected with story time, such as a December program centered on Robert Barry's *Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree*.

Kathleen O'Dell, director of community relations of the Springfield-Greene County Library District, remembers a conversation with a library patron after a class presented by a local chef. "A lady came up to me and said, 'What in the world is a *library* doing having a cooking program?!?' I answered, 'It's because libraries believe in doing anything we can to enrich people's lives. Usually it's through books and literary activities like author talks, but people learn by fun programs like cooking. And all around the room, we have pulled a lot of cookbooks and entertainment books out of the stacks, and we invite everyone to check them out.' Then she said, 'Well, I wanted to let you know that this is really amazing, that a *library* is having a cooking program!'"

Learn more

- St. Louis County Library's *Art @ Your Library*, slcl.org/art@yourlibrary. With 20 branches covering the county's 524 square miles, offering more than 13,000 programs, this is the busiest library system in the state.
- Barry-Lawrence Regional Library, www2.youseemore.com/blrl – The central website's information about all 10 branches in Barry and Lawrence Counties includes a gallery with lots of pictures of special activities including the hands-on arts classes.



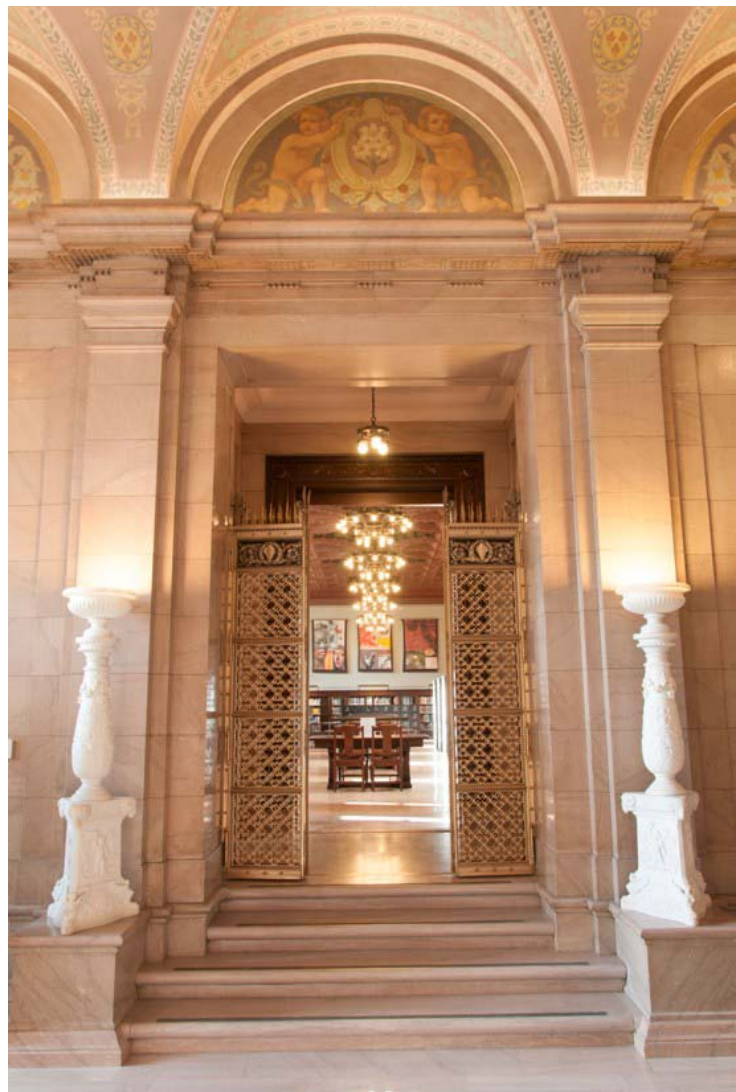
Comic book drawing workshop, part of the St. Louis County Library's *Art @ Your Library* program for children and teens

Walk around inside a work of art

Some library buildings are so architecturally distinguished both inside and out that they are works of art themselves.

The Grundy County Jewett Norris Library in Trenton in north central Missouri was built in 1891 specifically as a library, but it has the look and feel of a Victorian mansion, with its stone and brick exterior and the rich woodwork of its interior doors and fireplaces. "When I'd come here as a small child, I'd get goose bumps," said Director Theresa Hunsaker. "At that time, I didn't know exactly why. But I knew the library was special."

Many public buildings in the United States from about 1880 to 1920 were in the Beaux Arts style, the "beautiful arts" taught in Paris that incorporated classical details such as columns and sculptural groups. One of the grandest is the St. Louis Central Library, the flagship of the 16-branch St. Louis Public Library system. Designed by Cass Gilbert, who also designed the St. Louis Art Museum, and built in 1912, the building closed in 2010 for a spectacular \$70 million restoration and, where needed, modernization. It reopened on December 9, 2012, just in time for its centennial.



Entrance to the Fine Arts Room, Central Library, St. Louis Public Library



Columbia Public Library

On the other end of the spectrum is the Columbia Public Library, designed by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates of New York in 2002. The light-filled structure, built with glass blocks and Missouri sandstone and granite, has become a city landmark. In 2009, the building received the “Striking Structure” award in the first-ever Columbia Image Awards of the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The 2012 renovation and expansion of the Washington Public Library was even designed around a work of art, *Missouri Wildlife II*, a wall-sized painting of a local landscape by muralist and painter Gary R. Lucy, who grew up in the Bootheel and now lives in Washington.

The library was originally the upstairs floor of a 1980 building whose ground floor was the headquarters of the city’s police department. When the police got their own building, the old building was gutted and redesigned for the library. “We discovered that where the painting had always hung was still the best spot for it,” said Director Nell Redhage, “but with the renovation, the interior designers also planned the colors of the whole library around the colors in the painting. Everyone loves the colors because they are an earthy, traditional look—so relaxing and warm.”



Gary Lucy’s *Missouri Wildlife II* sets the tone for the warm woods and earth colors of the computer console room of the Washington County Library; photo by Jacob Sharp

Learn more

- Grundy County Jewett Norris Library, grundycountylibrary.org – The library’s mission statement calls for it to provide for county residents’ “educational, information, recreational and cultural needs.”
- Gary R. Lucy, garylucy.com – The creator of the Washington Public Library’s mural is active in the city’s vibrant cultural life.
- St. Louis Public Library, slpl.org – Founded in 1865, the system now boasts 85,000 cardholders and is visited by more than 2 million people every year.



Patrons: How to help your library get more involved with the arts

Volunteer—join your Friends of the Library.

- “Our staff could not have done our mini-golf project without the Friends and volunteers.” – Hallie Yundt-Silver, Hannibal Free Public Library
- “Our Friends of the Library provides the funds for our book contest.” – Robin Westphal, Livingston County Library

Grundy County Jewett Norris Library

Become a library board member.

- “Boards establish policy and direction and make plans.” – Hallie Yundt-Silver, Hannibal Free Public Library

Help build partnerships between your library and organizations you know.

- “Say to your librarians, ‘I’m one of your patrons, and I talked with a couple of groups in town who said they’d like to provide a free program. Would you like me to make a couple of calls to them for you?’ If you’d like a program that costs something, get in contact with the Friends of the Library for your district and ask them to consider underwriting a performance.” – Kathleen O’Dell, Springfield-Greene County Library District

Tell your library what you want.

- “Your library wants to know what kinds of things the community wants, so talk with your local staff. Your library is a public institution. Whatever you want, your library is there for you.” – Jessica Ford, Mid-Continent Public Library

Libraries: How to create more arts adventures

Explore the talents of your staff.

- “Our staff members are youth specialists and create a lot of our *Art @ The Library* programs themselves.” – Nicole Clawson, St. Louis County Library

Explore the talents of your board and volunteers.

- “I am fortunate that one of my board of trustee members, Carolyn McGowan, runs a dance school and is active in Joplin Little Theater, so she knows how to find the local talent. She has bent over backwards to be helpful—she did this even before she became a board member.” – Sue Oliveira, Webb City Public Library

Interact with your colleagues at other libraries.

- “I think the best resource is the statewide and regional conferences we have. For instance, the Missouri State Library provides workshops on how to conduct summer reading programs. When somebody’s bragging about what they did at their library, you get an idea!” – Hallie Yundt-Silver, Hannibal Free Public Library

Take advantage of exhibits created by others.

- “When we hosted *Journey Stories* from the Smithsonian, it didn’t cost us a cent. The Missouri State Archives is a wonderful source for that sort of thing.” – Sue Oliveira, Webb City Public Library



The Lightning Thief mini-golf hole, Hannibal Free Public Library



Partner with a full spectrum of local organizations.

- “Any library could do something like our *Arts @ The Library* if there are any arts organization in their area they could pull in to do programs.” – Nicole Clawson, St. Louis County Library
- “We partner with local organizations including the Westport Center for the Arts, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and more to create interactive and fun programs.” – April Roy, branch manager, L.J. Bluford Branch, Kansas City Public Library
- “We partner with the Springfield Astronomical Society, which sets up several telescopes in a field near Library Center.” – Kathleen O’Dell, Springfield-Greene County Library District

Learn what your own community wants and needs.

- “Our staff and managers in each branch really know the personalities of their neighborhoods. They schedule programming that taps into the interests and requests of the people who use their branches.” – Kathleen O’Dell, Springfield-Greene County Library District

Theodore “Priest” Hughes of Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre in *Poets of the Plains*, a 2008 Script-in-Hand performance at the Kansas City Public Library

Work to your library's unique strengths.

- “We don’t try to compete with the size of the collection and what people can find in nearby Joplin. Instead, we look to do what we can do for people that the other local libraries don’t. We have found that people use our library primarily for recreation—like our little old ladies who love their cozy mysteries! We have a wonderful public area that is perfect for art exhibits and music programs, which tie into that recreational purpose but still do have the educational angle.”
- Sue Oliveira, Webb City Public Library

Don't be afraid to fail—just keep trying different ideas.

- “For every successful program you have, you are going to have an unsuccessful one. Don't be afraid to try. Our bookmark contest could just have well have not succeeded. We would have moved on and tried something else.” – Robin Westphal, Livingston County Library



Babaloo Music & Fun (Rob Compton) at a branch of the St. Louis County Library

Consider Missouri Arts Council funding.

- “Our funds can make the difference between a successful and feasible event and one that cannot be presented due to lack of funds. Don't forget [the Missouri Touring Performers Directory](#) on our website for engaging performers for your library audience.” – Beverly Strohmeyer, executive director, Missouri Arts Council

All images are courtesy of the organizations featured.

About our cover photo: The Community Bookshelf runs along the 10th Street south wall of the parking garage of the Central Library in downtown Kansas City. The 22 book titles reflect a wide variety of reading interests as suggested by Kansas City readers and then selected by the Kansas City Public Library Board of Trustees. For a complete list of the titles, click [here](#).

Thanks!

We couldn't have reached the librarians resourced in this article without the help of the Missouri Library Association and the Missouri State Library.

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